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Survey responses on COVID-19 vaccine willingness, hesitancy guide public health planning efforts for when FDA-approved vaccine is available

LAWRENCE – Of more than 3,031 Douglas County respondents to a recent survey, 55% indicated they would definitely take an FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccine, and 23% indicated they probably would take it as well.

“These survey results are promising as we look to communicate effectively to our community to address the safety and efficacy of any FDA-approved vaccines,” said Charlie Bryan, Business Systems Analyst with Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health. “We continue to analyze the survey results as well as plan for equitable distribution and accessibility of an approved vaccine when its available to the public.”

The survey was available for Douglas County residents from Oct. 21 to Nov. 4, and it sought to measure the willingness and hesitancy of community members to be vaccinated, decision-making factors, and preferences around vaccine resources and vaccination sites in the community.

Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health and Unified Command partners offered the survey for planning purposes on distribution once an FDA-approved vaccine is available.

About 11% of respondents said they definitely would not take the vaccine and an additional 10% said they probably would not.

“There are complex reasons why people responded with hesitancy. It will be important for us to continue to analyze this feedback as we work to plan and communicate with our community and provide them the information they need as an FDA-approved vaccine becomes available,” said Alex Kimball Williams, Health Equity Planner with Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health.

The safety and effectiveness of the vaccine were the most prominent concerns respondents identified. Doctors and local health agencies were indicated by respondents as their most trusted sources of information about a vaccine. Survey respondents were mostly representative of the geographic and racial populations present in Douglas County.

Geographically, Lawrence respondents were more willing to be vaccinated compared to areas outside of Lawrence. Additionally, we observed differences across race, with Black and Native American/Alaskan Native respondents least willing to be vaccinated.